Introduction

By Olga Gladky Verro

“Caught in the Web of History” describes how history, people, and events touched the lives of the members of one family and how they affected their fate. However, these events affected and destroyed the lives of millions who lived in Russia, Soviet Union, Ukraine, Poland and Baltic states. It includes the periods before and during the Revolution of 1917-18, during the Civil War of 1919-1922, during the historical experiment of the Communist regime, Bolshevik oppression and Stalin’s dictatorship in the Soviet Union from 1922 until the German attack in 1941. It includes episodes that happened during the World War II: German occupation of the Ukraine and Gestapo concentration camp; labor and prisoners of war camps in Germany; and NKVD camp on the territory liberated by the Soviet Army where the apprehended civilian German men were processed and quickly deported to reconstruct Soviet Union. It concludes with the end of World War II and the struggle of millions of refugees in the post-war Europe from being forcibly deported “home” by the Soviets.

It was compiled from published and unpublished materials written through the years from 1945 to 2008 by: by my mother, Antonina Gavriylovna Berezhnaya Gladky, my father, Orest Mikhaylovich Gladky, and those written by me, Olga Gladky Verro.

The text includes the entire unpublished manuscript, “Nikita Khrushchev In My Memoirs,” written in 1967 by my mother Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky. In it she describes her personal experience of teaching, 1922-1924, the former leader of the Soviet Union, Nikita Sergyeyevich Khrushchev, and her further encounters and contacts with this historic personality. In the introduction to her “Memoirs” Antonina G. Berezhnaya Gladky wrote:

“Although many details of the events which took place many years ago have somewhat faded in my mind, those things that I remember about Khrushchev may provide the reader with the

image of a simple Russian man who emerged during the Revolution of 1917 from the unknown masses to play a very important part in Russian history. The Revolution gave to Khrushchev and many others the chance to gain the power by their shrewdness and persistence."

It includes in whole or in parts the published and the unpublished works by my father, Orest Mikhaylovich Gladky, who wrote short stories between 1945 and 1983, published mostly in the immigrant's newspapers and journals, all of which were based on real life episodes that happened to him, his family, his friends, and others. He describes unique, but experienced by many, episodes about White Army volunteers in the defending Russia against the revolutionary Reds; about the plight of the peasants during collectivization; and about the struggle of the individual for survival under CheKa, KGB and NKVD unrelenting search and annihilation of the "enemies of the people" as were coined the persons suspected to be disloyal to the Bolshevik dictatorship.

It also includes description of life in one Italian family before, during, and after WW II, and episodes from the Italian Legionnaire Air Force activities in Spain, in 1937-1938, during the Spanish Civil War as recounted by my husband, Giulio Verro, and from the records he kept in his airplane's "Book of Flight."

I recorded and wrote the chapters on: the family ancestors from about the middle decades of the 1700's and thereafter; the family history as recounted by my father and my mother, my husband, Giulio Verro, and my own recollections of the events that occurred before, during and after World War II. I also infused the material with information from the letters, tapes, and telephone communications with my relatives and friends. Then I compiled the final manuscript in chronological order and adapted, revised, and enriched the collected material to overlay family history on the background of historical events. I have also translated into English all materials that were written or recounted in Russian, German, French, and Italian.

All the material included in "Caught in the Web of History" has been presented as objectively as possible, however, no one could have been a completely neutral observer of the historical events that took place during those difficult times. Each chapter reflects the values and traditions of its writer received from his or her family, the influence of social milieu, and the personal experiences of their lives. It shows how each writer felt, the hardships each endured trying to adapt to life as imposed by the Revolution and by the Civil War in Russia, by the Communist regime and Stalin's dictatorship in the Soviet Union, by the German occupation, by World War II, and by post World War II events.